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A PHILIPPINE ROMANCE



"BENEATH THE OVERSPREADING BRANCHES OF A GIANT FLAME TREE"

A PHILIPPINE ROMANCE

LILLIAN HATFIELD STANLEY



NEW YORK
Hudson Publishing Company



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A PHILIPPINE ROMANCE.

BY
LILLIAN HATHAWAY MEARNS



NEW YORK
Aberdeen Publishing Company

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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A Philippine Romance

CHAPTER I

IT was at the close of a long, golden, tropical afternoon, and the vesper bells were ringing leisurely, yet insistently, from every church steeple in Manila; that city of churches and tolling bells, of ruins, mystery and romance.

Within the walled city the air was still hot and ylang-ylang scented, but on the Luneta drive a breeze was blowing fresh from the scintillating bay, refreshing cosmopolitan Manila in its monotonous gyrations around the bandstand; that Mecca of music lovers, whatever their nationality.

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In the long stream of *carromatas*, *carra-telas* and modern American equipages, was a victoria drawn by a conspicuous pair of high-steppers, and toward its occupants the eyes of social Manila were directed; some curious, some envious, but all interested and perforce admiring.

The young woman who leaned back against the cushions of the victoria was of an unusual type; a subtle blending of the East and the West, with her slender grace, bright hair, and dark eyes; not the great lustrous, languorous orbs of the Oriental, but ever-changing eyes, brimming one minute with mischief, life and eagerness, and the next dreamy and thoughtful, full of mysterious shadows.

She was different from her countrywomen whom she passed on the drive, not alone by reason of her beauty and vivacity, but because of her strangely enthralling and captivating personality—that rare gift of the gods.

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Just now she was comparable only to sunshine, breezes and champagne; all sparkle, brightness and joy. She was in a gay mood, now echoing an aria from some opera as it died away; now chatting in sprightly fashion with her companion, a naval officer from one of the ships that lay at anchor in the harbor.

They were a striking enough couple to attract attention anywhere; the dapper, inconsequent young officer with the bright Saxon coloring and the boyish face, marred at present by a discontented frown, and the beautifully gowned woman whose hair under the large black hat was set aglow by the sun, now a molten disk of gold on the horizon.

The woman's delicate yet spirited face bore the imprint of character and individuality too strongly for mere prettiness, and her alert girlish figure and strong, expressive hands all conveyed the impression of eagerness and intensity.

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She was young—strangely young to be the mother of a sturdy boy of five, yet more than mere youth was her perennially buoyant, sanguine temperament; that brave spirit that refused to be quenched, in spite of the sorrows and vicissitudes of life.

Though she had sojourned for years in the tropics, she was thoroughly alive and vigorous; a fact that she attributed to her periodical trips to China and Japan and to her quiet life at Bacalor.

Evanston was deeply, fatuously in love with her, as every one knew. They knew also that Patricia Ridgway was not a good match from a worldly point of view, for she possessed neither high birth, station, nor valuable pecuniary assets. True, she always dressed charmingly, but then she was living up the proceeds of a year of hard work in a western opera company, and there was no reason, said the ladies of the army and navy coterie, why

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she should not "put her best foot foremost," since she was in Manila ostensibly to make a good match.

Of course, if she married Evanston, which seemed probable, the world would soon forget that her father had been dismissed in disgrace from the service and had ultimately married a *Filipina mestiza*; but this stigma, in addition to the floating rumor that her mother had been a Spanish dancing girl, was a serious drawback to her social aspirations.

"So you see," she was saying with her bright smile, "I am a lady with a rose-tinted future as well as a drab-colored past. I have mapped out my course, and nothing now foreseen can make me change it."

"And you will never sing for the public again?"

Patricia shook her head a little sadly. "Penn's mamma must be a very proper and conventional person after this, and no one

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knows better than I that popular opinion is against a woman who makes her living behind the footlights. I admit that the life has a certain fascination and glamor, but I have decided that it is not for me. Uncle Stanley was never really satisfied while I was on the stage, and I think Penn and I shall be far happier living quietly at Bacalor.

“Teaching, to be sure, is not as remunerative as singing, but I shall save enough to send him to a military school, preparatory to West Point, when the time comes. Fortunately, I know the Malay language almost as well as the Spanish, and I have two years of experience back of me.

“We shall have a few good friends, and grapple them to our souls with hoops of steel,” she paraphrased gaily. “And such friends—why, in the Occident people don’t appreciate what friendship may mean.”

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But Patricia was never serious long, and she added with a whimsical smile:

"You must live in the *Boski* for that. I have had a friend come to me in my hour of need, when the boat had brought to my door a number of hungry travelers, and offer me her *pièce de resistance*, her salad, her dessert, and her *muchacho*, to go home to bread and cheese."

"They expect too much, these inter-island travelers," Evanston said decidedly. "Now, when *I* come, 'a loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou'——"

But Patricia held up a warning hand.

"Please, Evanston—let us not recur to the subject even in jest. You are not to count on seeing me for at least a year, and by that time things will be different. You may be very far away, and even uncle will have returned to the States for his prospective bride.

"Yes, it will be a little lonely for me," she

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said with a sigh; "but, after all, Bacalor has been my home, and I am thoroughly oriented. To me the East is a land of blessed forgetfulness, and even at Bacalor there will be times when I shall forget to remember."

"*You*, teaching the young Bacalor idea to read, write and spell!" Evanston exclaimed in mocking tones.

"And why not? I have done it before, and with some success," Patricia retorted. "I am not wholly a butterfly, and when I have tried my wings I shall settle down again."

"But the great unwashed——"

"We have a convenient shower attachment, and plenty of soap and water," Patricia said, smiling. "I usually succeed in making their last stage better than their first, and sometimes they become quite fastidious. You see, I have lived among them for almost eight years, and they seem like 'mine own people' when I am with them. Indeed, I have found in them less

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treachery than in my own race. If they gaged our standard of morals by that of some of our officials and by the Americans who have cheated them, they might well meet antagonism with equal feelings of antipathy."

"I grant that they are in a position to form an unflattering opinion of our national character," Evanston said dryly. "They can observe at close range some of the worst specimens of American loafers. Don't think I have anything against your dear protégés, only it seems so unfit for you, who so adorn society, to bury yourself—— But there is no use arguing—you're so adamant. What, may I ask, are you going to do in the meantime?"

"Oh, it's the life of *dolce far niente* for me for a time. I shall bask in the tropic sunshine and taste the joy of living once more; a fool's paradise, you will say, but this is my day to live.

"The plantation at Bacalor needs looking

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after, but I have a man to look out for my interests there, and as long as Uncle Stanley remains, I shall content myself with an occasional inspecting trip.

“Dear old uncle! How he loves to make me happy, and to gratify my every wish almost before it is expressed. It seems like a dream world; the peace and security, the feeling of *camaraderie* here in Manila. I sometimes think I am enchanted—or else I am a victim of the poppy. Life moves along so easily and sweetly; one really lives instead of being hurried breathlessly along—one hardly knows whither. In the last few years my life has been so turbulent and restless that I feel entitled to one perfect year. Why, even Penn notices the difference in me lately and makes a companion of me.”

Evanston's silence spoke volumes of disapproval and protest against her entire scheme of existence, in which he began to realize that

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he had no permanent place. She aroused him from his revery with a sudden exclamation:

“Look, Evanston! Here comes my handsome stepmother, looking as smart as usual. Watch her cordial greeting as our victorias pass.”

Evanston looked up in time to catch a frigid bow directed at Patricia from a middle-aged *mestiza* lady, driving alone and dressed in Parisian finery which was far more *bizarre*, if less tasteful, than the beautiful Mrs. Ridgway's artistic ensemble.

“She loves to flaunt her Paris gowns and her Spanish jewelry before me,” Patricia said with a shrug. “But wait until she grows fat and dowdy, which she probably will before long, in spite of her care and her modiste. By that time I shall have made a success of my half of the hemp land, and can afford to laugh at her treatment of me. Strange, isn't it, that

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people should begin to hate you the moment they consciously wrong you?"

"Yes," said Evanston, who knew her story; how the clever *mestiza* stepmother, instead of jealously guarding the interests of her husband's only child, after his death had contested her claim to the portion of the vast hemp and cocoanut plantation that had belonged to Patricia's husband, her father's friend and partner, and had done her best to usurp the lion's share of the profits.

"But perhaps you're lucky, after all," Evanston added, "for you wouldn't want her as an incumbrance of the clinging-vine order; she uses too much French scent."

Patricia smiled, but her spontaneous gaiety had vanished and she said earnestly:

"Do you think she is malicious enough to spread my story broadcast, with the embellishments of a vivid imagination? I ask because some one—some of my friends—have acted

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strangely of late. I fancy they avoid me, and I cannot imagine why. You know, she has always disliked me, and I know she has tried to make me out something of a fiend. It isn't worth worrying about, but do you think people disapprove of me merely because of my having made my living on the stage? I suppose as a young widow I should be very circumspect, very subdued, remaining modestly in the background, but I should prefer cremation on the funeral pyre to sackcloth and ashes for years afterward. Uncle never disapproves of anything that I do, and why should I care what others say?"

"Why, indeed? Let the world wag, since it finds that occupation so vastly amusing. You know that we all admire you hugely, and who is better fitted than you to be happy and enjoy life? Who wouldn't rather be loved and admired than approved of, anyway?"

Patricia shook her head. "You don't un-

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derstand," she said gently. "I always want the approval of the people I like, and it has been my dream for years to be a leader among people of my own kind. But, you see, I am fettered by what some people are pleased to call my 'past.' Unconventional though I am, I refuse to be classed with the vulgarians, and if my stepmother has circulated any fictitious tales about me, she will have trouble should they reach Uncle Stanley's ears."

Evanston's face took on an uneasy expression, and an uncomfortable color crept into his face, but Patricia did not notice. Her eyes had darkened angrily, and she looked with sudden concern at the bay, where the sun was slipping behind the walls and the roofs of Cavite, lying mirage-like in the distance.

The sky was lead-colored, shot with flame color and mellow gold; and beneath the canopy of riotous, exotic color lay the shimmering bay, slowly fading from rose to a shadowy violet

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hue like the skin of a grape. All about lay mute testimonials of the vanished Empire. As in the old days, austere Augustinians and sleek Dominicans walked beneath the palm trees in the fading light, and over all brooded the soul-sufficing peace of the tropics.

"I must go back now," she said abruptly.

"So soon?" Evanston's voice and eyes held the persuasive power that Patricia knew so well.

"But it isn't soon. We have been arguing too long in a circle. Besides, I have an engagement with Captain Van Dorne at six, and he would not overlook the breaking of a promise. He would think——"

"And do you care so much what he would think?" Evanston interrupted, with a searching look at the vivid, inscrutable face of the woman at his side.

"I thought that affair was done with," he added with a frown.

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"He will take it as an affront," Patricia continued serenely. "He will be angry, not because it matters really, but he hates to be thwarted, and he is both proud and sensitive."

" 'Thou hast only walked unaware,
Malice not one can impute,' "

Evanston quoted with as near a sardonic smile as his weak, good-natured face could achieve.

"Nonsense," Patricia said hotly. "You, to accuse me of malice aforethought; you who have told me how worldly he is, how ambitious and fastidious! Have I wealth, blue blood, high social standing, or anything that would appeal to his avaricious soul? No, Evanston, there could never be anything more than friendship between us, so don't be sarcastic."

"You're ripping, Patricia, a regular winner, and you know it. We who love you, love you for yourself alone," he said gallantly. "You combine the charm, good nature and charity of

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the thorough worldling with the brains of the litterateur and the character of a nun. By Jove! you're remarkable; and, furthermore, you have managed to preserve a few ideals and illusions—how, I don't know. If you'd only listen to reason——”

“Evanston,” Patricia broke in, “what's the use of my listening, even conceding that it *is* reason? The rest of my life I shall give to Penn, as I have told you. You say that I have a conscience. Then why do you want me to disregard it and break my engagement?”

Her face was perplexed, for she recognized that a crisis had been reached in her friendship with Captain Van Dorne. For weeks he had persisted in singling her out of every gathering; had seemed to prefer her society to that of any one else, and had become an intimate friend, both to her and her uncle, only to suddenly drop out of their lives with no excuse or explanation.

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Patricia, after racking her brain for some plausible reason, concluded that her step-mother had circulated certain facts of her life, which she for reasons of her own had withheld and which Van Dorne had learned; and considering the importance he attached to patrician birth and high social standing, the knowledge had terminated his friendship. He had given no excuse for his strange behavior when they had met at a ball a few nights previous, and yet——

Their conversation came back to her mind fraught with a new significance. He had explained that he had been unusually busy, and worried by some knotty problems, adding that he had sadly missed seeing her and basking in the sunshine of her smile. When she had asked if she could help him in his difficulties, he had said quickly: "Yes; you can take a drive with me, if you will," and had set a date. It was becoming only too obvious that he had heard

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some gossip and that he disapproved of her and her connections, yet was vacillating as to which he should sacrifice—his pride or their friendship. He was, after all, something of a snob.

Well, she, too, had pride, she told herself, and since he had given her the opportunity, she would end it all. She hated herself for acknowledging even to herself that she wanted to see once more this proud and impatient scion of an aristocratic family. It had been a mid-summer's dream and it must end. She might be of plebian birth, but thank heaven she had too much self-respect to try to hold any man's interest under the circumstances. Truly she had been dreaming, but she would dream no more. The eager light died out of her eyes and she looked at Evanston a little wistfully.

"You want to know why I ask you to disregard your conscience?" he asked after a pause. "Well, because this is my last chance to ap-

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peal to your heart. We sail to-morrow at day-break, for God knows where."

Patricia uttered a startled exclamation. "So soon, Evanston? If I had known——"

He looked at her questioningly, and Patricia, who had no doubts of his sincerity, said, with a sigh, that was more for herself than for him:

"Evanston, you are very foolish, and it is quite useless; indeed, it is, but you have been such a loyal friend—— If you wish it I will drive a little longer."

"Narcisso, to the Malecon," Evanston directed the *cochero* with a triumphant smile. But Patricia did not smile. She knew that she would not find Van Dorne on her return.

At *Casa Blanca* at the same hour, peace and a dreamful quiet reigned supreme, broken only by the croak of the frogs, the far-off falsetto voice from a phonograph, and the wash-

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ing of the waves on the sea wall. Lights were beginning to gleam faintly from the harbor and from the ships at anchor.

The garden of Major Randolph's quarters was deserted, but for the presence of a young monkey, who was busily unrolling the burnt-out cigar of the last visitor. In the rear of the house preparations for the late dinner were going forward, but the rest of the house was silent and deserted. The windows with their shell panes were pushed back to admit the last lingering rays of sunlight which filtered through a large flamboyant tree, its blossoms shining like flame against the dazzling white stone, and gleamed on the brasses and mahogany, touched caressingly the peacock-blue draperies of the gilt figure of Buddha, the egg-shell china on the tea-table, and lingered lovingly on the huge bowl of scarlet hybiscus.

Captain Van Dorne, having finished his drive through Malate and Singalong, wound

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up with a flourish before Casa Blanca, just as the church bells ceased chiming. He was a tall, powerfully built man with no special mark of the Van Dorne good looks, save for his eyes, which were strangely magnetic, and the characteristic stern yet sensitive mouth. He glanced at his watch, then sprang out eagerly, humming a snatch of the waltz "Manila" and wondering if this time he was going to make a fool of himself in earnest.

He had told himself the night before that he didn't care a continental if her mother *had* been a Spanish dancing-girl with no education or breeding. She might have been a Portuguese peddler for all it mattered. His scruples had been fantastic and he had made himself miserable during the weeks that he had tried to prove to himself that he could keep away from her—the Sun Goddess. The result had been that his place in her thoughts had been usurped by the distrusted Evanston, with

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his bland smile and ingratiating ways, and he realized that he was in danger of losing her forever.

In the lower court he found Pedro, removing the last traces of *tiffin*, and he answered Van Dorne's inquiries by exposing a wonderful set of gleaming ivories and pointing toward the harbor. The señora had gone driving with a "*caballero*" from "out there." She had left word that she would be back at six. The *Com-mandante* and Penn had also gone out.

A shade of annoyance crossed Van Dorne's face, but he assured Pedro that it was "*bueno*"; he would wait in the garden until the señora returned. But his jaw squared itself and there was an angry light in his eyes as he swung into the garden, where he had formerly been such a frequent and welcome visitor.

Pedro followed him with a box of cigars, one of which Van Dorne accepted, then threw himself into a wicker chair beneath the over-

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spreading branches of a giant flame tree. For a while he smoked, and with what patience he could summon, watched the slow-moving procession as it passed in the lengthening shadows.

There were straight-shouldered women in calico *sarongs*, bare of neck and ankle, with long, flowing hair and baskets on their heads; there were monks, a few officials, a Chinese merchant in his victoria, a half-dozen interesting-looking Americans in modern turnouts, half-naked coolies, and, last to pass, a solitary native, carrying a tiny coffin on his head, his face stolid and unmoved.

He liked the tropics; a liking tinged at times with irritation, and he was enjoying his new duties in Manila, having recently resigned the post of governor of Sabitan.

His brother, whose tragic death two years previous had followed close upon his father's death, had been a leader, and he had been bolied by a treacherous foe in ambush some

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years after the American occupation of the islands.

Van Dorne had been stunned by the blow, but his first act was to ask for a station in Sabitan, the seat of the disturbance with the natives, and the province in which his brother had met his death.

Heart-broken, lonely and despondent, he had grown in the following year into a reserved, taciturn man, living an isolated life among natives whom he hated and distrusted, at a station where there was no bridge, no poker, no ladies, no amusements. It was then that his artistic talent came to his rescue, for the country was rich in material, fascinating bits of local color, studies of *genre* life, and remarkable models for portraiture. Van Dorne was a clever artist, and, liking his work, he grew, during his leisure hours, to be more and more of a recluse.

At length he was chosen as *aide* to the com-

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manding general, and later appointed military governor of Sabitan; but it was gradually borne in upon him that he was a failure at dealing with the natives of that wild and uncivilized island; semi-barbarous people just emerging from centuries of superstition, fear and medievalism.

He had asked to be relieved, and his chief had complied with his request without protest; but Van Dorne felt that he had lost caste by his recent act. He had undertaken a problem in administration only to make a fiasco of it, and he felt that his resignation had met with the general's disapproval.

This unspoken reproach had haunted him at first, but gradually the keen edge of his dissatisfaction had worn off; for once in Manila his life underwent a complete change. Once more he tasted of social pleasures, and a success that in spite of himself was warming his heart, which he had long considered frozen;

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that was thawing his reserve, humanizing him, and doing much to bind up old wounds.

To his great surprise, he who had been an exile from his own kind, who had been rated stern, uncompromising and haughty by his inferiors, now found himself a social success.

Born into a fine old family of Virginia, he had a heritage of pride, chivalry, and a certain personal charm that made the Van Dornes leaders.

He was sought out, lionized, and made much of, until gradually he drifted into the position of social promoter, professional dinner-out and social success *par excellence*. It was a bitter-sweet success, but it had not yet palled perceptibly. He had been hungry for friends, for the softer influences of civilization, and he still believed that his moods of dissatisfaction were mere passing phases of foreign service.

Then he had met Patricia Ridgway, who, as

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the daughter of an army officer and the niece of the popular Major Randolph, was prominent in army circles. She had married young, and her husband, a young planter, who had been part owner of her father's vast hemp and cocoanut plantation, had died two years previous, while abroad for his health.

She was versatile, original and picturesque; possessed of a crisp humor and a quick intelligence; and she, too, was much courted. People were arrested by her beauty, to be at length riveted by her charm, which was as elusive as it was compelling, and which more than compensated for the things of which circumstances had combined to cheat her. Van Dorne had whimsically named her the Sun Goddess, and the name faintly defined her charm.

There was some mystery clinging to her, and it was through Evanston that Van Dorne had at length learned what he supposed was the truth concerning her. A few hours of reflec-

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tion had convinced him of the folly of falling deeper under the spell of her fascination, and until the night of the ball at the governor-general's palace, he had studiously avoided her.

It was Evanston's dangerous rivalry that had finally precipitated this fresh folly, and now Patricia was driving with that officer, while *he* waited in the garden, with what patience and cheerfulness he could summon.

"I'm sick of these brown devils," he said, as he threw his cigar to Jocko. "For treachery, hypocrisy and general deviltry, commend me to the Malay race."

He looked around for some suggestion of Patricia's presence, but there was nothing—only a little blue-backed memoranda that might have fallen off the garden seat on to the grass, and a few tin soldiers that told of Penfield's recent presence there.

Mechanically he picked up the book and opened it. The slanting rays of the fiery trop-

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ical sun filtered through the lacy foliage of the flamboyant tree and touched the dark hair of the young officer as he sat with the little book in his hand, smiling as he turned the pages, a softened and deeply absorbed expression on his face.

He had known for some time that Patricia was a dabbler in literature, and he had read and approved of a few articles and short stories that she had told him were her first successes. She had also confided that for a time she would lay aside her literary work and "live" during her sojourn in the islands, at the same time collecting material for a novel, her first work of any length. She had consulted him on many points and had found his appreciation of artistic values and possibilities extremely helpful. He was a soldier, but he was also an artist, and on this common ground they had met, and in spite of the difference in their conditions of life, had spent many an hour in the

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old garden, chatting as happily and unconcernedly as two children prattling of life in their nursery world.

"I shall try to forget that I am a working-woman with a checquered career," she had said, and this, considering that she was one of the most beautiful and interesting women in the quaint old city, was obviously easy.

The *raison d'être* of the little blue book was therefore apparent the moment Van Dorne opened it. It was a scrap-book dedicated to "types," stray bits of philosophy, useful information or bits of local color; mere butterflies of thought.

Before he realized what he was doing, he had become engrossed and highly amused. "Gad! She's got all the notables labeled," he said as he turned a page. "She's on to them all, and yet I never heard her say an unkind word about any one. Think how blissfully ig-

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norant they are of her nefarious scheme. She's certainly clever at pen-portraiture."

There were enough characters in the book to furnish a *dramatis personæ* for several novels, and Van Dorne's smile broadened as he recognized some of their mutual acquaintances. There was the fair American heroine, the faded beauty with the hard black eyes and blondined hair; the eccentric aunt, hunting for curios; the dishonest official; the ambitious young engineer; the naval hero; the inordinately vain and middle-aged lover; prominent and interesting army officers; civil government officials; a handsome Russian naval officer, and a score of others, with accessories in the way of native characters.

There was a page of jottings—detached bits of information with a short paragraph at the end that gave Van Dorne a fresh insight into the woman's character.

"Why," she wrote, "is there so little charity

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for these wild island people? Why are they looked upon by so many as heartless and brainless infidels—less than human? God made them, too, and so many of them are children, intellectually, if not in years. Much that seems evil and vicious in them is only the result of long cycles of evil and unhappy history and inherited superstition. My destiny, I have often felt, is in some strange way bound up with that of these simple, primitive people, and Penn, I hope, will want to play a part in working out their salvation when he grows up to be a great soldier or statesman.”

Here she had dropped her pen, but Van Dorne remembered that she had mentioned some plan of teaching school at her old home in Bacalor, after her uncle's return to the States. He felt a sudden stirring of the old sympathy for her, and admiration of her courage. After all, it was not her fault that she had felt the slings and arrows of life, and she

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was one woman in a thousand. He turned the page, and his eye fell on Evanston's name, with a few penciled lines beneath:

"A man cast in heroic mold; fine, chivalrous, with the kindest heart and the handsomest face on this side the Pacific. Altogether a fine type of the American man on foreign service."

Van Dorne's lip curled, and he shrugged his shoulders as he turned the page.

"I wonder if she's tagged me," he muttered. Holy smoke! It isn't fair, but—'see ourselves as others see us.' I wonder——"

Several minutes passed, and his eyes remained glued to the white page, on which a few terse sentences were scrawled. His face clouded, his eyes darkened ominously, and the book fell to the grass unheeded, while he gazed stonily before him, his lips set in a straight, stern line.

"Treachery in camp," he said aloud, after a moment, "trickery and deception—the result of

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her Spanish blood, I suppose. Evanston told the truth for once."

He turned instinctively to the only living thing in sight. "Rather unsparing of her invective, isn't she, Jock? Pretty hard on us, isn't she, old fellow?" The little creature was whining piteously and making frantic efforts to reach Van Dorne, who had alternately teased and petted him.

He was aroused by a bat flying close to his face, and he threw back his head impatiently. Then a hard look came into his eyes and he sprang to his feet and began pacing the garden path.

"It's Evanston!" he muttered. "He hates me and he would not hesitate at maligning me or prejudicing her against me. I wondered if he might not have lied about *her* to *me*, but her actions seem to substantiate his statements. It seems impossible, though—flattery, sympa-

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thy, a counterfeit of liking, and all the time—this.”

His first impulse had been to meet her with reproaches, recriminations, but he was proud; and instead he turned on his heel and left the garden, cursing the luck that had ever brought him into it.

“Tell her I couldn’t wait,” he said harshly to Pedro. “Tell her anything you d—please,” he added, and pulling his cap over his eyes, he strode toward the gate. A moment later he was being whirled toward the Luneta, his brain, too, whirling, for he was angry; so angry that he looked neither to right nor left, nor spoke to his friends, who stared curiously at him as he passed them on the drive.

Patricia, who was returning, saw him driving furiously, and her heart grew heavy with a premonition of evil. She knew she would pay dearly for indulging her resentment, and yet

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she laughed so merrily that Evanston was deceived.

Van Dorne directed the *cochero* to the Army and Navy Club, scarcely knowing where he wished to go. He would break his rule and take a cocktail, two or three perhaps, and then—sleep and forgetfulness.

But his resolution was never carried out. A Chinese boy barred his progress as he entered and handed him a cablegram. The general was on an inspecting trip in Sabitan, and he guessed at once that the message was a trumpet-call to the scene of trouble. His chance had come sooner than he had dared to hope. His presentiment proved correct; a murder had recently been perpetrated, and he was needed once more to play the part of Nemesis and exact swift retribution for an act of lawlessness.

He went at once to his room to look up the schedule of inter-island boats, and he sat late into the night, facing the future with haggard

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yet resolutely hopeful eyes. He had tried at first to laugh to scorn the shallowness of Patricia's judgment; had accused her of treachery and had attempted self-justification; yet his conscience gave such reasoning the lie, and he realized that after the long months of isolation and bitter reflection the reaction had been too much for him. The sudden popularity, the good comradeship and subtle flattery, had gone to his head like an insidious wine.

He was not self-analytical; he had never seen himself under the microscope before, but when he remembered how much of a fetish he had made of his patrician birth, and how much of conscious superiority there had been lately in his attitude toward her, he decided that he deserved her contempt; that he had been an unmitigated fool.

He saw how she should have thought him overbearing, complacent, even snobbish, if she had gaged the depths of his infatuation and

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his egotism in fearing to jeopardize his worldly success.

He had accused her of treachery, yet had she ever encouraged him except by her charming manner and her apparent enjoyment of his society? Probably she had smiled into the eyes of Evanston and others in the same winsome way. She had played with him, and he had been an easy mark. He had been warned that she was a heartless flirt, but he had trusted her; his confidence had been hard to shake, and even now he was raking up excuses for her; he had been more to blame than she.

In many men egotism would have been so deeply ingrained that their love could not have outlived such an attack on their pride, but Van Dorne was humble and thoughtful for many days, and in the end his love triumphed.

A few days later Van Dorne was sailing the high seas once roamed by fanatical Moros and pirates, feeling once more the mystic spell of

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the transcendental East, as he sat in a deck-chair, gazing up at the seven gleaming stars of the Southern Cross, reminded that "nations rise and fade away . . . pyramids molder into dust . . . but the stars fade not . . . uninfluenced by the fall of empires or the wreck of human hopes and beliefs."

He listened to the regular "chug-chug" of the machinery, which seemed to be hammering into his brain with significant persistence the words that, since that afternoon in the garden of *Casa Blanca*, had haunted him, waking or sleeping. Whether he would listen or not, they were there in letters of fire for him to read and re-read until his brain reeled.

"A hard, brilliant, satirical man, with a will of iron, and an implacable hatred for the wild people of these islands. Otherwise a coldly egotistical and self-complacent snob." That was what she thought of him.

That night he dreamt that he stood, ship-

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wrecked and despairing, on a desert island, and that as he watched, a vessel appeared on the horizon line, coming nearer and nearer, until he could discern the faces and figures of his brother and Patricia, standing by the railing and waving to him.

His frantic joy over the return of those he loved, whom he believed he had lost forever, was soon quenched, for when he motioned for them to come nearer shore they shook their heads, and Patricia called mockingly:

"You are a coldly egotistical and self-complacent snob."

Then the dream changed, and his brother sat beside his cot, looking at him with kind eyes, but with the same stern lines of mouth and chin that he remembered well and that spoke of self-mastery and resolution.

"Bob," he was saying, as he pointed to the palm-strewn islands with their brown-thatched roofs, clustered at the foot of green hills, "this

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is your battlefield, and you stand or fall according to your success here, for the Orient is the theater of future events, the gateway of the world. *My* duty was to fight and subjugate these people; yours is to civilize, teach and uplift them. Your hatred for them is as hatred for me, for I died when on an errand which was to convey to them an assurance of our kindly intentions toward them. Remember that every time you raise your hand against them, you raise it against me."

"Amen," Van Dorne breathed aloud, as, half asleep, half awake, he sat up to face the rosy dawn.

CHAPTER II

TWO years, that seemed like an eternity, had passed over Van Dorne, and the hot weather found him again at Sabitan, plunged in work that threatened to engulf him.

The past two years had been full of change, of also kaleidoscopic shifting of scene, since the pacification of renegade Moros. He had been given another chance by his chief, and he had endeavored to "make good" this time. He had been placed in command of the garrison on the coast, after helping to establish peace in Sabitan, and his hopes had gravitated toward the once relinquished post as governor of that province.

He disliked paper work, and he was obliged to handle a great volume of correspondence

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from prospective settlers in the district of Sabitan. Then his report on the physical condition of the island, full of detail and important data regarding the available land, hemp, etc., had made heavy drafts on his time and patience.

He had striven to forget his own personal troubles in the broader interests of humanity, and he had taken a curious pleasure in rubbing elbows with men who were his inferior. He scorned no task, however menial, when there was anything to be done in the cause of humanity or civilization. Certainly his forefathers had shown no more pluck in hewing out the State of Virginia than did their young descendant in transforming Sabitan into an orderly and well-governed district.

He had begun by chasing recalcitrant Dattos; making arrests on the piratical seas; exploring, mapping, slaving over paper work; whatever there was to be done, he seemed eager to do, and tireless in its execution. He

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had volunteered for duty at posts whose names stood for sickness and isolation, yet so far he had escaped unscathed.

At last he had won the goal; he had been appointed governor, and for six months he had been pacifying, upbuilding, governing, whatever worked for good to a wild and barbarous people, amidst scenes resembling those of medieval history.

The dream that had been so ruthlessly shattered in Manila, the old city of dreams and memories, had left his heart empty, save for the bitterness that stayed long, and left him only when success had crowned his efforts.

He believed that he had lost a large part of life in the loss of his gallant father, and, later, his brother, but there had been reserved for him the added bitterness of knowing that he was despised by the woman he loved. There was left him—work, and the salvation of

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Sabitan, which he felt was a work that would count in the future of the islands.

He drifted back into the wonderful dream world of art, which he loved for its own sake, and which was the only softening influence in his hard, rough life. He sketched the heads of Dattos and Sultans; native belles and little sketches of *genre* life, full of color and charm. He drew the heads of dream-women, and, strangely enough, they all had delicate, oval faces, the faces of dreamers, yet, in startling contrast, many devils of mischief lurked in their dreamy eyes.

He had not seen Patricia Ridgway since the day he had shaken off the dust of Manila and had turned his face southward. Since then he had cherished no fond delusions as to a possible reconciliation. He was not sure that he desired such an eventuation, for had she not deceived him? And he was no fool.

Yet in the dim recesses of his brain was the

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ever-present, though unacknowledged, desire to some day make her change her opinion of him; to make her at least respect him. He had resolved to readjust his views, marshal his forces, revive his faith, and succeed where before he had failed.

The years of tireless labor had brought him his reward in the long-coveted post, and then Destiny, in the ponderous form of a recalcitrant Datto, had taken him into the hill country, the home of an isolated tribe.

He had been patient, and the Moros had become insolent and bold, preying on other tribes and committing murder and rapine. His party had met with resistance upon landing at the nearest coast town, but they advanced, flanked the enemy out of their trenches and shot them down as they fled. Brave though they undoubtedly were, their marksmanship was poor, their firearms few and inferior in quality.

At last the principal offender, Datto Kam-

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palo, was captured, and his house and stronghold burned to the ground. Peace seemed imminent for a time, but no sooner was the strict surveillance relaxed, than a fresh outrage, in the murder of an American soldier, took Van Dorne and his party into the field.

Knowing the roads and the topography of the region, he took charge of the situation, led them to the Moro strongholds, and punished the assassins. But the trip through mangrove swamps and rice-paddies had brought sickness in its wake, and Van Dorne, worn out at last, fell an easy victim.

Failing to recuperate at Sabitan, he was finally sent to headquarters of the province for treatment.

Knowing that his old friend, Major Randolph, now promoted to colonelcy, had been stationed there for the past year, he raised objections, but they were overruled by the wise

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young *medico*, who admitted that Van Dorne was in bad shape.

A week or more after his arrival at headquarters, Van Dorne was sitting by the window of the special ward, looking out over the jade-green waters of the Sulu Sea, a perfect picture of tropical calm and tranquillity. Across the straits rose the misty shape of mountains, veiled in a translucent purple haze and seen through the breastwork of cocoanut palms that fringed the sandy beach. Van Dorne's artist eye revelled in the exquisite water-color effects and the picturesqueness of his surroundings, but what appealed to him most forcibly was the startling contrast of modern civilization against a background of crude barbarism.

Suddenly the door swung open to admit the khaki-clad little figure and glowing face of Penfield Ridgway, a charming replica of Patricia.

"Hello, youngster!" Van Dorne called out

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with a sudden look of relief and pleasure. "You're late to-day. Where's the adored Jock?"

"Oh!" Penn exclaimed ruefully, as he scrubbed his grimy face with a dingy handkerchief, "I couldn't bring him to-day, 'cause he's almost drowned. It was my fault. I told Abdul to give him a bath in the sea, 'cause he was dusty and made me have to change my clothes such a lot of times, and we nearly died laughin', it was so funny to see him try to swim. The old duffer came near drowning before we could get him out. But Patsy heard the racket and came out with a blanket to wrap him in. He's dryin' in the sun now, and Patsy's feedin' him brandy. You bet she was mad through."

"Patsy" had been Patricia's nickname since her childhood, and Penfield had drifted into the habit of using the pet name, which so well fitted his gay, girlish mother.

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"I should hardly blame her for being angry," Van Dorne said with a little laugh. "You're a little rascal, and must provoke her with your mischief. I don't believe she's ever very hard on you, is she?"

"No, she takes it out on the *muchacho* or Abdul," Penn confessed with a grin, as he finished his restless exploration of the room and came bounding toward Van Dorne like a young Comanche.

"Here, Van—I almost forgot about Patsy's flowers. She sent them to you, and this note, too. Say, you're better, aren't you? The chinks in your face are all filling up. I guess you'll be leavin' soon."

"To-morrow morning," Van Dorne said briefly, looking with a softening expression at the handful of roses and gardenias, and wondering if they were intended as a peace offering; but he made no move to take them, and Penn laid them down.

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"I wish you wouldn't go; but anyway you can come to my birthday fiesta, can't you, Van? Uncle says you're not going to the stag dinner at the club, so I want you to come to mine. Patsy has to be there, you know, but I call it a 'stag' dinner, 'cause you and me are men, and Patsy's sent you a written invitation."

Van Dorne smilingly tore open the dainty envelope, then glanced dubiously at the child. Penn saw the indecision on his face as he folded the note and climbed persuasively on to his knee, looking at him, wistful and eager-eyed.

But a week's thinking and philosophizing had brought Van Dorne to the conclusion that he could not afford to assume an attitude of resentment toward any one, least of all toward Patricia, who had been the unconscious instrument of rousing him to an appreciation of his possibilities of accomplishment. He might never see her again, for she was soon to leave for Japan, and he wanted her to see in him

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something more than a mean spirit of resentment.

Since he had redeemed himself in his own eyes, he no longer feared to see scorn in hers. It could be only a farce of friendship, yet he decided to accept the invitation as a loop-hole of escape from the excitement and conviviality of a dinner at the club, for he had not wholly recovered his normal strength.

The thought that after two years of separation he might no longer care, should he meet her face to face, never occurred to him, and this was the last time that he would see her.

On one of their recent drives, Colonel Randolph had hinted that there was the possibility of a match between his niece and the earnest young missionary minister, and that her plans were as yet unsettled, the likelihood being, according to his own opinion, that she would give up her plan of returning to Bacalor, and, instead, return to the States with him.

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Van Dorne had spent that evening smoking like a furnace, and even Penn had found him taciturn for several days.

So, after due consideration, he decided to accept the invitation to Penn's birthday *fiesta*, and they parted on the best of terms, Penn a little puzzled by the alternate demonstrativeness and indifference of his big, moody friend, but convinced that it must be all right, since his hero could do no wrong.

For a long time after he left, Van Dorne sat staring thoughtfully out of the window. Then the sweet, insidious fragrance of Patricia's flowers, drifted to him from where they lay neglected and wilting, and he rose to put them carefully into a cracked green bottle, which struck him as being symbolic of his future life at Sabitan, that queer island world, where the squalid and makeshift were almost inseparable from the sublimely beautiful and the ideal.

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In his future, over there behind the misty blue hills, the niceties of life would not be forgotten, but would often—how often?—be neglected.

So it happened that just as the sun was dipping into the rose-tinted waters of the Sulu Sea, Van Dorne walked slowly along the white road bordering the sea, a tall, gaunt figure with a grave face, on which was a gleam of amusement as he listened to the prattling of a small boy in immaculate white, who had come to meet him.

The general's boat had crept silently in at dawn, and she was to sail on the following morning for Sabitan, bearing him with her, eager to take again upon his shoulders the responsibility of governing a strange people with feudal customs and wild, shy ways.

As he looked at the transport, already partially loaded, he realized what a hold the wanderthirst had upon him. He was eager to "hit

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the trail" again, to traverse the olive-drab paths through the jungle on missions of peace.

Yet there was a feeling of regret, almost of sadness, for he was going to break the last semblance of a tie that bound him to the old life, and to his homeland, which he would not see for many years. He dreaded the good-bys, and his eyes rested with a great sadness on the animated, magnetic little face of his small comrade.

They stopped for a moment at the untidy little wharf, where already the native youths and maidens were gathering in the dusk, some thrumming on guitars and banjos, the others chattering in soft tones. Here the fashion of the *barrio* was displayed; ravishing costumes that pleased Van Dorne with their rich color. There were Moros in plush upholstery, burnt orange, black, purple and parrot green, their waists laced in with sashes, and their gaudy jackets ornamented with metal clasps. The

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ubiquitous knives offered a sinister suggestion that Van Dorne could fully appreciate, yet they were his own people now, and he gazed after them with an almost paternal interest. There were a few Moro women, with betel-stained lips and teeth, their coarse black hair twisted into a knot, from which the ends straggled forlornly. They, too, wore gorgeous, embroidered jackets and equally gaudy *sarongs*, and plush *chinelas* were on their feet. A few Chinese and a Malay servant in his checked *sarong* and little round cap, completed the theatrical-looking assemblage, that might have stepped from a comic opera stage.

Coasting along the palm-fringed shore, where godowns stood out sepulchrally white against the masses of hot, sultry green, were Moro *vintas* with checquer-board sails, their black hulks rising out of the water, stained crimson by the rising moon. They both remembered that scene long afterward.

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They could feel the warm salt spray on their faces as they stood looking eagerly at the transport, listening to the hoarse commands from the bridge as the supplies were carried on.

Penn watched, drawn by an irresistible fascination. He had often watched the men spear-fish, when the *banqueras* came in near shore, standing motionless and alert at the bow, and looking like bronze statues in the wavering red light. But just now he was too deeply absorbed in watching the loading to be interested in piscatorial arts.

He was talking all the while, telling Van Dorne with graphic realism how he had played at the game of strategy, maneuvering his tin army all through the hot afternoon, on the strip of sandy beach, and he sighed at the thought that the excitement was over, the battle fought, the game played out.

For Van Dorne, too, the game was played

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out, and he was thinking of the strange irony of fate that had permitted him to meet at last the one woman in the world who had taken the place that his brother had filled as comrade and friend; who had understood the irresistible charm of the life he loved; of wild nature, of sojourning under strange southern skies; of getting at the soul of things through literature and art, only to learn that underlying this sympathy, at once rare and beautiful, was a secret distrust, a repugnance, that destroyed all the pleasure of memory, and left only its sting.

"How good the sea smells!" Penn said dreamily, as he clung to Van Dorne's hand. "Van, I'm going to be a sea captain when I grow up. Then I can stand on the bridge and give orders to the men running like ants on the deck."

A look of intense enjoyment was stamped on the child's emotional little face, and Van Dorne patted his shoulder encouragingly.

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"That's right, youngster. You are destined for the service; which branch, it's too early to predict, but when you get the wander-thirst you'll come back to the tropics, and the sea will call you. I wish you could take this little trip with me."

"But I don't want you to go." This plaintively, with the glint of a tear on the long lashes.

"To-morrow night," Van Dorne went on, more to himself than to the child, "we'll be sitting on the deck under the Southern Cross, listening to the ting-a-ling of guitars and mandolins, and to the natives singing. The wind will be blowing fresh from Borneo, and it'll be jolly sailing, youngster."

Penn was silent, now watching all the spectacular effect of the fishermen's torches as they patrolled the shore-lines and listening to the tom-toms from the coast settlement.

"Patsy's going to marry the sky-pilot," he

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said suddenly with dreamy irrelevancy. "I heard uncle telling her that he'd be perfectly satisfied if she did, but *I* wouldn't. I think you'd make a nicer father, and I don't see why she likes that bald-headed——"

"Hush, Penn!" Van Dorne said sternly. "Not so loud. How is she? You forgot to tell me."

"Oh, she's all right, I guess, only I've caught her crying lately, and sometimes she's cross, especially when the sky-pilot sends her flowers. He sends bushels, and they smell so strong that sometimes she throws them out of the windows.

"Look at the fireflies in your hair," cried the inconsequent and easily diverted Penfield.

"They're setting your hair on fire."

But Van Dorne had fallen into a brown study.

"The sky-pilot is more her kind," he mut-

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tered as he took the child's hand captive. "He's a better man."

"He isn't! I hate him! He has red ears, and his hair——"

Penn gave a sudden howl of delight as Van Dorne swung him unceremoniously to his shoulder, and his conversation was easily deflected into other channels.

They wended their way along Calle Seville in the moonlight, passing the club, with its lights and music, to be swallowed up in the dense shadows of the almond trees. The air was soft and heavy with the tangy odor of smoke and ylang-ylang, with now and then a whiff of cocoanut oil. At last they reached the colonel's *casa*, standing out clear-cut and austere in the moonlight, against a dark background of palms.

Patricia—he was sure it was she—was standing framed in the wide open window, a tall,

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slim figure in black, with a white flower in her hair, and she waved her hand gaily to Penn.

Van Dorne caught his breath a little, for, after all, it had been two long years, and this was the last time he was to see her, perhaps the last time he would have even the right to the memory, still very dear to him, of the delightful days of their early friendship.

The young missionary minister almost brushed against him in the darkness as he emerged from the shadow of the almond trees that stood sentinel-like in front of the house, and Van Dorne's unfriendly eyes followed him as he walked away.

She came to meet them, her graceful figure outlined by a clinging, gold-spangled scarf which shimmered like still water under the moon.

"How good of you to come," she said, holding out her hand with the old familiar smile, followed by a grave, questioning look.

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"Are you really well again?" she asked quickly. "You look a trifle thin, but better than I had expected to see you. I am so glad we persuaded you to come to *us*, instead of trying to sit out a long course dinner at the club. Uncle said you weren't considering it seriously."

Van Dorne followed her into the dimly-lighted *sala*, explaining that Penn's importunate pleadings had decided him, and Patricia said apologetically:

"I fear Penn has bothered you a good deal of late, but really I couldn't keep him away. I never saw such a case of hero-worship. He is with grown-ups so much, and I fear the freedom and attention are demoralizing him. Penn, dear, tell Abdul to bring the captain's cocktail and start the *punkah*; it's so very warm this evening."

It seemed quite natural to be sitting oppo-

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site her again, and Van Dorne had but to look at her to fall quickly under the old spell.

"You have been well all this time?" Van Dorne asked the stereotyped question in the conventional tone.

"Oh, yes," Patricia replied lightly, the color rising in her cheeks. "The time has passed delightfully, and I am much enamored of this beautiful land and of the life here. Just now it is unusually gay, with dinners, dances and tennis tournaments——"

They were interrupted by Abdul, who appeared in the doorway and glanced toward Van Dorne with a gleam of recognition in his somber eyes. Lithe and graceful, with lean face, wrinkled, bronze skin and silky hair, black as jet, he seemed a harmonious adjunct to the oriental setting. Habitually cold in his manner, he merely relaxed his stony expression in response to Van Dorne's greeting.

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"What has become of my old friend Fuzzy?" Van Dorne inquired, turning to Patricia.

"Fuzzy and my best silver forks disappeared simultaneously," Patricia said with a shrug of her gleaming white shoulders. "He was growing lazy and trifling, anyway, and now he is languishing out in the jail. '*Shikata ga nai*' is the Japanese motto, and I have tried to apply it to my domestic troubles."

As Abdul stole away with the tray she turned toward the window and, with a comprehensive sweep of her arm toward the exquisite scene it framed, said:

"Do you wonder that I hate to leave such a place? It has the elusive charm of a Corot, with the exotic color of a Rousseau. If I were an artist like you——"

"But you are," Van Dorne interrupted; "and a better one. In these days the pen is mightier than the brush, and I know you to be clever with the former."

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"You forget that for this year I promised myself all the enjoyment I could get out of life, and the woman was to come before the artist," Patricia commented. "I couldn't resist taking voluminous notes, and, what is more, I have become saturated with the atmosphere of the place. Every day I have made a visit to the *barrio*, and have preached soap and water without ceasing. They are interesting, if incomprehensible people, and I regret leaving them. I know the names of all the children, and many of them have given me '*regalas*,' trinkets for which I have no use, but am obliged to accept with thanks."

"I suppose Uncle Stanley has told you that we are leaving for Japan?"

"Yes; and then?" Van Dorne waited impatiently for her answer, and when it came he distrusted it.

"Then? Why, my plans are still a little vague, but I still hold to the old idea of teach-

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ing, and Penn and I expect to set up our roof-tree at Bacalor. Try to imagine me in the old rôle of '*maestra*,' instead of lady of leisure. During my idle hours I shall probably write, and of course I shall be near enough to look after the plantation. Mrs. Dasi is not a good business woman, and I have been too far away to look after my interests properly."

"But I understand that you——"

Abdul here interrupted them with the announcement that dinner was served, and Patricia, glad of an opportunity to steer the bark of conversation into safer waters, arose.

Penn, stiff and starched, looking browner and thinner than ever, sat big-eyed and solemn under the wavering pink lights, attending strictly to the business in hand, an expression of blissful contentment on his face, as he glanced from his mother to Van Dorne, from his dignified position at the head of the table.

Though he could tell a *kris* from a *campilon*,

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his powers of discrimination were taxed to the uttermost by the formidable array of knives and forks.

As Abdul stole noiselessly around the table, Penn, who was as frankly admiring of his Mohammedan friend as of his hero, Captain Van Dorne, winked knowingly at him, a bit of freemasonry that Abdul responded to with a flash of white teeth and a nod of his turbaned head, all of which Penn construed into meaning that everything was arranged for them to go to the native theater after dinner.

Patricia's easy grace gradually thawed the slight coldness in Van Dorne's manner, and they talked with the old freedom and ease, omitting only reference to the contretemps in Manila.

As the dinner progressed, Patricia grew less talkative, and it was she who finally broached the subject, lightly enough, but with no hint of coquetry in voice or eyes.

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"We used to be such good friends in the old days; somehow we always found so much to talk about, and I begin to realize that our interests, our friends, have changed in the past two years. I thought perhaps you might write to me after you returned to Sabitan, but you left me to glean what news I could from your occasional letters to uncle. Interesting letters they were, too."

"You must remember how busy I have been, Mrs. Ridgway," Van Dorne said, avoiding the main issue. "Accounts of hikes and exploring expeditions do not usually interest the ladies."

To himself he added: "She is a clever actress, and, womanlike, she is trying to put me in the wrong."

"Friendship counts for little to you men, when matched against the fascinations of hiking," Patricia answered, toying thoughtfully with her fork.

"I was glad to hear that you had been given

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the governorship of Sabitan," she added more briskly. "Uncle says that you are just the man for the place, and that you have infinite patience—that you are liked and trusted by the natives, which is certainly a triumph in diplomacy."

"And yet their good will is not so difficult to win," Van Dorne explained. "Kindness and allowance for their superstitions, the result of three hundred years of isolation and barbarism from the beginning—that is the principle."

"I am only beginning to understand them myself," he went on after a pause, "but I believe that they are secretive only when they find themselves watched, and cruel only when they believe themselves wronged or mistreated. Their bashfulness, dignity and reserve appeal to me as rather attractive, and some of the old fellows are real characters."

Strange lights and shadows had played over

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Patricia's face as she watched Van Dorne across the fragrant masses of Cadena d'Amor.

"A change of heart," she told herself. "He has changed so much that he doesn't realize that he has changed at all."

"You see," he went on, "the chiefs of a dozen or more tribes have to be impressed with the good intentions of our government, and it takes time and patience to do it."

"Tell me about your hike after the recalcitrant Datto," Patricia continued. "Uncle tells me you were the life of the party, cheering every one and making light of hardships."

"Oh, I like it," Van Dorne said, smiling. "The mosquitoes bother us all, and wading through swamps, mud and carabou paths is not inspiring, but there was always excitement and interest. I should have been an explorer or a globe trotter, I suppose. The lure of the trail is growing irresistible, and I am anxious to get back. However, there will be only rou-

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tine work for a time, with an occasional inspecting trip to vary the monotony. The boats will come only occasionally, and I shall be quite out of the path of civilization."

The light of enthusiasm had died from his face, and Patricia for the first time realized his illness. There was a tired, haggard look on his face that was unusual, and his clothes hung loosely on him.

He in turn had watched Patricia throughout the meal, and he was puzzled by the subtle change in her. She looked older, yet he could scarcely define the change, for she was still very lovely, and the long rides in the sun had colored her cheeks healthily, so that she defied all suspicion of ill health. Yet there were shadows in her eyes, and the droop of the lips told of disappointment and spelled sadness. Then she caught his eyes, and some impulse that belonged to her old gay life made her sud-

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denly lift her wine-glass to her lips with the old bright smile.

"To the governor of Sabitan; may he live long and prosper, and may Sabitan be but a stepping-stone to higher things."

Before Van Dorne could respond, Penn, who had surreptitiously had his wine-glass filled, held it aloft and said eagerly, his voice high with excitement:

"To Patsy, as beautiful as a immortal! Isn't she, Van? To the beautifullest mother in the whole world!"

Patricia put her white hand tenderly over Penn's little brown paw and smiled indulgently into his eager little face uplifted to her own.

Van Dorne, looking across at her, forgot the present in the bitterness of the past and its memories.

"You're right, Penn," he said slowly. "'As beautiful as an immortal,'" he echoed, and the mist of the coming years seemed to rise and



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float between them as he looked at her out of half-closed eyes.

“‘To the light that lies in woman’s eyes,’” he began, and added with a quick, unsmiling glance at Patricia, “‘and lies and lies and lies.’”

The words were hardly spoken before they were regretted. For the first time he had forgotten his resolution. Patricia laughed faintly as she rose from the table, but there was a hurt, puzzled look in her eyes that surely did not lie, as she led the way to the *sala*.

Penn, as usual, clamored for a story, and Van Dorne, glad of the distraction, told him a tale of piracy and fighting, while Patricia sat staring out into the fragrant, white night light.

The *sala*, which was the social center of the community, both civil and military, was dimly lighted by a mammoth Chinese lantern, which cast flickering, goblin-like shadows on the polished floors and walls, with their strange col-

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lection of hats, sinister-looking *bolos*, *krises* and *campilons*, and *petates* of native weave. There were books and flowers and gleaming brasses, everything luxurious and homelike, and Van Dorne thought of his home in Sabitan with sudden distaste.

Penn, as he listened, stared gloomily at the weapons on the wall, and finally brought Van Dorne's story to an abrupt end by asking anxiously and irrelevantly:

"Van Dorne, if the Moros at Sabitan were to kill you, would they pick all the gold out of your teeth, the way they did Captain Stuart's?"

Patricia gasped and looked at Van Dorne with horror in her eyes. He was smilingly reassuring Penn, when there was the patter of bare feet in the hall, and Abdul appeared in the doorway with an apologetic air.

"He wants *me!*" Penn exclaimed, with a beseeching look at his mother.

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Patricia glanced questioningly at Van Dorne. "Penn has been wild to see the Hindu juggler and the acrobats," she said. "Do you think it is safe?"

"Perfectly so," Van Dorne assured her with a smile. "Let the youngster go."

"Very well, Abdul, you may take him, but if they do anything horrible bring him away. He's a nervous child."

They watched the two walk away in the moonlight under the silvery palm trees—the fair little boy and the swarthy Malay, with his cold and impassive expression and unfathomable eyes.

"Shall I play a little?" Patricia asked as the footsteps died away. Van Dorne assented, adding that he would like to hear her sing once more. He took a cigar, but it was with a disturbed and turbulent mind that he listened to her rich contralto voice, as it rang through the

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sala to die away, as it seemed, among the whispering palm trees.

She was indeed a riddle, and though he could not grasp the means of accomplishment, he realized that somehow she had reversed the situation, and had contrived to make him feel that it was he who owed the apology. He was under a spell that for a moment made him, stern leader of men, quite passive and helpless to play any part save the one assigned to him.

Yet she had played the hypocrite; she had fooled him cleverly, and he had expected her to play the part now, to be gay and fascinating, and he had braced himself against her witchery, only to find her looking sad and world-weary; and though she had laughed and jested, it was with an effort. Was she happy, he wondered, and would her life be satisfying, if, indeed, she were to marry Amos? He knew how she loved change, excitement, the glamor of exploring new and strange

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places, and how she hated a dull, monotonous life, as only the gifted and restless can hate it.

She was singing the "Aida" motif, where, on the banks of the Nile on a brilliant, tropic night, she keeps her tryst with Rhadames. Patricia's voice rang out with sympathetic feeling:

"O native land,
O home beloved;
I shall no more return,
No more, no, no, no more return."

This cry, only less passionate than the agonized thought of Rhadames coming to say farewell, followed by the quick resolution to seek peace and oblivion in the waters of the Nile, brought a rush of regret over her own approaching farewell to her tropic home, that, though she was no weak sentimentalist, made her voice break at the end, for she was leaving

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behind her many happy memories of the island of palms, with its rice paddies, its little bamboo huts with their dusky inmates, of quiet nights where the weird Moro music mingled with the familiar notes of "taps." A thousand memories, some pleasant, others painful, assailed her with poignant realism.

She sprang up, bringing Van Dorne's musings to an end by proposing a stroll to the little native theater.

"I like to hear the queer bamboo music," she said hurriedly in explanation; "and then I can see that Penn is safe. I don't like to think of him in that crowd of fanatics."

"Fanatics!" Van Dorne echoed, smiling. "So you admit that they are that?"

"I admit that there are many fanatics among them, just as there are among Americans. That many of them are pirates and murderers, I admit, but it is not so much their fault as it is their misfortune."

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"I have changed my opinion of them, as of many things," Van Dorne acknowledged. "I was rabid against the little brown malcontents when I saw you last."

"You have learned the language that needs no interpreter and that is understood in heathen countries and in strange lands," Patricia said earnestly. "There is so much good in them if one has the patience and sympathy to discover it."

They had come within the circle of light from the theater and stood a moment unobserved, listening to the sweet, reedy music with its wild rhythm. There was a window where they could look in, quite hidden by the shadows, and Patricia, laughing at the farcial imitation of a box-office as she passed the door, stopped to look in at Penn, whom she singled out, sitting spellbound beside dusky Abdul.

She was wholly unconscious of the incongruous and striking picture that she herself

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presented—a tall, graceful young American princess, who might appropriately have stepped from a motor-car before a New York opera house, and yet she stood there, aloof from the simple, tawdry crowd and feeling alone and very forlorn.

Van Dorne thought she had forgotten him, she was so still. The music held her in a spell which neither cared to break. They were standing shoulder to shoulder, yet Van Dorne seemed as far apart from her life as she stood from the lives of that dark-skinned audience, separated from her by only a thin screen of bamboo.

He did not care what became of her, she was sure of that. Why should he? He was going into a wider sphere and out of her life forever. And she——

She had arrived at the cross-roads, and she realized that the only one she *could* take was the lonely road. Her uncle would soon return

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to the homeland and would at last claim his prospective bride, and there was left for her—Penfield and the travesty of a home in Bacalor among an alien people, until the time came when the boy should be placed in a military school.

Patricia, the gay, the buoyant, the undismayed, was experiencing the engulfing loneliness of bright spirits, when their hopes and their courage suddenly fail them and the sun seems eclipsed forever.

Van Dorne was going away, her uncle was leaving her, Evanston's engagement was reported, and she was engaged to Amos. She, of all people, to be a minister's wife; to leave the brave, gay life of the service, which she knew and loved. Her uncle had approved strongly of the match and had spurred her flagging enthusiasm at the psychological moment. She had promised, but that was before Van Dorne had arrived. All evening she had

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been in a mood bordering on rebellion, and now she said to herself: "I cannot! I will not! Better a lonely life at Bacalor; better even to drift back to the old life of the stage." But that she knew would be her last resource and only a refuge from utter loneliness, for there was always Penn to be considered.

Bacalor! That, then, was to be her destiny. She was young and strong—full of possibilities for action, and this buoyancy would wear itself out in teaching savages. Eight years was a long time, and she would leave her island home a faded woman. She looked half enviously at the plump señoritas in their gala attire, with roses in their hair and cheap jewelry on their necks and arms. In spite of the poverty and barrenness of their lives, they were happy—doubtless they all had family, home and some one to care for them. For the first time in her brave, busy life, a flood of self-pity rushed over her and she looked at the

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golden head of her boy with troubled, adoring eyes blurred with tears. He, at least, should have the best life offered, if she could give it to him.

The music wailed on, strangely, crudely appealing as the curtain fell. Had the curtain fallen also on the drama of her life?

The warm, flower scented atmosphere seemed to oppress her, but she waited until the native acrobats, in their gorgeous trappings, and the Hindu juggler, with his mango tree and string-chewing tricks, had reappeared. Feeling that she must get away from the cigarette smoke, the cheap, Spanish perfume, the lights and the music, she said to Van Dorne:

"Let us go back; I am tired this evening," and she drew her shimmering scarf closer, though the wind blew soft and warm through the palm trees.

Van Dorne stopped humming the "Aida" motif and looked at her as she turned for one

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fleeting glimpse of the golden head beside the black one. She walked swiftly as if to outstrip the tide of loneliness that threatened to engulf her and sweep her away from the safe moorings into dark and troubled waters.

They passed through the narrow, deserted streets, where the only sign of life was in a room fronting the street, and where some Malays were playing checkers and drinking *bino*. The night was warm, the moon shone red from beneath floating dark clouds, and they could hear the clanking of the dry branches of the almond trees and see the hot wind tossing the graceful branches of the palm trees.

Van Dorne had seen that Patricia was dis-
trait; he fancied he had seen the glint of tears in her eyes as she turned away, but he had said nothing, fearing to say too much, and he knew that silence was the part of wisdom. Somehow his resentment had melted away; he



"IN THE COOL, FRAGRANT GARDEN, UNDER A LARGE SWINGING LANTERN"

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no longer treasured the memory of the wrong she had done him.

"It is too late to put in my appearance at the club," Van Dorne said as they reached the colonel's quarters. "The Wurtzberger will be flat, and, besides, I may not see you again."

"Come in," Patricia answered simply. "The night is yet young, and uncle will not be home for an hour or two."

When they were again in the cool, fragrant garden under a huge, swinging lantern, which cast a pale light over the grass, outwardly at least, all seemed serene and peaceful, yet under the veneer of surface peace, smoldered fires that had power to choke and destroy, just as beneath the crust of the earth were forces that could make the earth tremble.

Patricia called to Mariano to bring cigars, but Van Dorne declined them and sat in silence, fighting a grim battle with his pride, while Patricia, also proud and strangely weary,

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watched; and though she talked on a variety of subjects and uttered the usual trivialities, her mind was busy with other things.

"It seems a pity that our friendship should have been spoiled by that little contretemps in Manila," she said at last. "I know it is of no importance now, but I always wanted you to know that it was not altogether premeditated—my breaking my engagement to drive with you that afternoon.

"Evanston's ship was to sail—I did not know it until the time I was to drive with you, and I lingered too long saying good-by. You had gone when I reached home, and I did not see you again or hear from you. Then when you got your appointment as governor, I hoped you would write, and I was disappointed that you did not. Of course, I know that we are sailing under different colors and on different courses, but may not ships signal as they pass on the high seas?"

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Van Dorne laughed mirthlessly. "When I saw you last you were sailing under the enemy's flag and you showed no desire to signal. I was only a derelict then, but now I am a man-of-war and you are a gay little pleasure craft soon to be wafted into a quiet harbor, according to reports."

Then, in a tone that grew suddenly alert: "To-morrow I sail for Sabitan, and I am glad. I was growing restless here."

"I, too, shall be leaving soon," Patricia said sadly, and a silence fell.

The frogs were croaking stridently and above the washing of the waves they could hear a man's voice singing. The fishermen from the squalid little coast settlement were coming home, their resin fires flaring momentarily in the darkness, to die out quickly as they fell like burning brands in the sea.

Often she had waked at night to hear some *banquera* singing, as the little fleet, like a pro-

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cession of Valkyres, drifted lazily homeward, and she had found a certain charm and sense of companionship in the human element out on the mystic sea in the dark, silent hours.

Now she watched them with eyes heavy with unshed tears and wished that she were one of them and could drift on forever.

The last verse of the chorus from the club drifted to her ears:

“Ho! Stand to your glasses steady,
This world is a world of lies.
One cup to the dead already,
Hurrah for the next who dies.”

The morrow would take Van Dorne into the field, and in these days, when one's dinner partner might a few weeks later be the victim of some murderous native, almost anything might befall him.

And he was going, believing that she had

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acted lies to him. What had he meant? Was it possible that he, too, had cared, and only that formidable thing—the Van Dorne pride of family—had stood between them?

As for her, she knew only too well that she might wander up and down the world, and never find again in any walk of life a man who inspired such trust and such intense admiration, coupled with the same compelling charm, and whose career she must watch with breathless interest, whether it took him to unknown heights or plunged him in the abysmal depths of obscurity.

At last she said desperately:

“Didn’t I predict long ago that some day you would feel the spell of the East and learn to love the life? Manila was delightful, but I wearied at last of the late hours, idle talk, frivolity and innumerable bridge parties. Think of those people with their heart-burnings, their jealousies, their intrigues and their

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conventions, while here we are free—and freedom is your fetish, is it not?”

Van Dorne assented, and she added:

“You are a great man down here. Every one talks of you, and the general swears by you. He says your influence is wonderful.”

“Great? Ah, no. I am only a cog in the great wheel,” Van Dorne said quietly. “We all know that the East has need to learn of the West, and I am merely the instrument for fusing the knowledge and introducing American laws and customs.”

“And yet you used to be so bitter. I often wonder how the miracle came about that enabled you to do this work.”

“No miracle. I had one chance and failed. My chief gave me another, and—it was a woman who awakened me to the realization of what I might accomplish,” he said impetuously.

“A woman! Who?” Patricia stiffened and drew back in the shadows.

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"Pardon me," she added quietly, "I had no right to ask. You—you must have cared a great deal for her."

"I did. I fear I always shall," he said in a lower tone. Van Dorne's face was in the shadow, but his voice held the fatal ring of truth, and Patricia steadied her own voice with an effort.

"And she? Does she——"

"No," Van Dorne said impulsively. "She despises me."

"Ah, no, Van! She couldn't! What makes you think so?"

She leaned forward—protest in every line of her supple figure.

"This," he said briefly. "I keep it always with me, as a reminder that I lacked toleration and was once a monument of egotism."

He felt for his little Indian purse—a gift from Patricia herself—and drew from it a worn slip of paper.

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"I can't see," Patricia faltered, growing cold with a sudden presentiment.

In silence Van Dorne held up a lighted match, watching her face, lit up for a moment, then swallowed up in darkness as the match fell from his fingers.

There was a long silence, during which Patricia sat rigid, staring dully at the paper and feeling that an almost tangible net of misunderstanding was weaving between them an impassible barrier. Then with a little sob, which even pride could not stifle, she rose, and tearing the paper to bits, flung it to the wind.

The shadowy shapes of trees and shrubs in the garden blurred before her. She still heard the monotonous iteration of the bamboo orchestra in the mad rhythm of *Mattchiche*.

"I hate myself. I almost hate you," she said, when she could speak. "That book was never intended for your eyes, and I never dreamt that you had found it—you, of all people. I

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always wondered why—but now I see it all clearly. For days I had missed the book, and Abdul finally found it for me with some things that Jock had scattered broadcast. I never guessed that you had read it. Why did you? Why?" She broke off and sank into her chair, breathing fast.

"It was a mere accident," Van Dorne explained deprecatingly. "I had no right to keep on when I found out what it was, but I became absorbed. At last I saw my own name, and—— I had no business to ever tell you. I never meant to, but for the moment I was mad, I suppose."

Patricia, silent and distressed, sat huddled in her chair, trying to collect her confused thoughts.

The restrained life of the Orient, the peace on the surface of things, had been a temporary anodyne—had held her quiescent, as in a spell, but now to the heartache of years was

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added the thought of Van Dorne's unnecessary suffering. He had loved her, after all, but now he hated, he despised her, and there was nothing for her to do but explain as best she might, and then—— Fate had so ordained that she was to go out of his life soon and forever.

Van Dorne saw that she was tired and unstrung, and rose abruptly, a half dazed look in his eyes as he looked at her, thinking it was for the last time.

"There seemed at first little enough incentive to live," he said slowly. "Gradually, strangely, too, perhaps, I became more potential, desperately eager to live and make you repent or at least change your opinion." He drew a deep breath and reached for his cap. "I hope that whatever comes you will be happy," he said as he rose. "Good-by."

But Patricia disregarded his outstretched hand and said imperiously:

"Don't go yet! Sit down! I have a right

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to explain, and then, whether or not you forgive me, I shall know that you partly understand."

Van Dorne, hesitating but a moment, obeyed her, and Patricia dropped into her chair.

"There is nothing to explain, is there?" Van Dorne asked, but his eyes lingered on her face, as if to hold it in memory for years to come. "I suppose I ought to sit up and make stereotyped remarks about your fiancé, and tell you how fine a man he is, but that is asking too much."

Patricia, seeing the haggard look on his face, could not resent the levity of his words, but went quietly on with the explanation:

"I wrote that in great bitterness of spirit—in one of my darkest hours, and I have known many. At that moment I hated you because I thought that you had heard a garbled account of my life and that the knowledge had killed the friendship that you claimed meant so much

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to you. Once you told me that I had helped you to a higher plane of living when you were with me. You spoke of that year before we met as—well, as a hell on earth, and yet you coolly dropped us out of your life, and because I had spirit enough to be resentful and break an engagement with you, you went without a word—without a good-by. Later I knew the reason. How? I extracted the information from my stepmother when you had gone. I had long suspected you had heard some rumor started by her.”

“Only that you were cold and that you enjoyed playing with hearts,” Van Dorne protested. “She warned me once in a playful, laughing way. It was left to your trusted friend Evanston to tell me that every one knew on good authority that your mother was a Spanish dancing-girl. He hated me, and he thought he was aiming at my vulnerable point.”

Patricia groaned. “‘Et tu, Brute?’” she

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said with a hard little laugh, her eyes fixed as she went back in memory over that conversation with Evanston.

"You always seemed happy enough when you were with him," Van Dorne went on bitterly. "I watched for some sign that you missed me, and decided that you were wholly indifferent."

Patricia, who was re-living those days of pain and futile questioning, laughed a little scornfully, though her face had grown pathetically white.

"Did you expect me to mourn in sackcloth and ashes, because you were too proud to care to have your patrician name coupled with my plebeian one? No! I turned to Evanston, who had always been kind and, as I believed, loyal, and that day when he begged me to break my engagement with you, I listened and weakly yielded."

"I have *that* score to settle with him also,"

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Van Dorne said darkly. "If he had brought you back in time this explanation might have been made before it was too late."

Patricia leaned forward, her eyes sparkling feverishly, her fingers pulling to pieces the flowers she wore.

"It isn't too late to tell you the truth about myself. You know about my father's dismissal from the service, and I have told you often how he atoned for any past mistakes by his noble, self-sacrificing work among the natives. You have heard, too, that my mother was a Spanish dancing-girl, and that is not true. She was a madcap girl, but there was much that was sweet and good in her, and she was remarkably pretty. Some wealthy friends took her to Spain when her grandmother died, leaving her alone, and while there she learned some Spanish dances, which she executed so gracefully that her friends persuaded her to try the stage. She made a success of it, but it was

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a short-lived one, for she met father, who was attracted by her lovely face and sunny nature, and eventually they were married. That is all, for she died when I was too young to remember, and since then—well, you know the rest; how father took me out of school to bring me over here; how I hated my clever, selfish stepmother, and how I made a marriage that was a mistake.

“My husband was a good man, and I think I satisfied him as nearly as any woman could, but he was very phlegmatic, very undemonstrative. I was sad and restless, and one day he said: ‘If you want some diversion, why don’t you teach the natives, since you speak Spanish so well?’ It was said partly in jest, but I decided that along that path lay my salvation. It was a hard, monotonous life, but it kept me from brooding, and in a way was interesting.

“Of course, when my husband’s health failed I gave it up and for months we lived abroad.

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His death was a great shock, and for many months I could hardly realize the change it made; that I was free to live my own life, with Penn to work for. I went to Uncle Stanley's for a few months, and then signed a contract with a San Francisco opera company, leaving Penn with a faithful old nurse and Uncle Stanley, who was delighted to have him. But when he was ordered to Manila he begged me to give it all up and make my home with him, so when my year was up, Penn and I came back to the Orient.

"I knew that a woman in my position would be subject to criticism, but I was very young—only twenty-three—and I had been so cramped and lonely that I longed to be happy like other people and belong to the dear old life I had loved as a girl.

"We lived a gay, care-free life, but it was a more natural one, and I didn't care what people said. Ours was the gayest house in Manila,

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and people who didn't care for me for myself, came to hear me sing. Some women were jealous and, of course, said 'catty' things, but uncle always upheld me; he was so glad to see me bright and happy once more; and I carried a clear conscience and a light heart.

"Many people thought me cold and unfeeling, and I was often spoken of as a heartless flirt, but you see those people did not know me. I had a few friends like you and Mr. Evanston, but most of the other men I knew were alike to me.

"It wasn't until I met *you* that I realized that many people like you—well-bred, polished and conventional—disapproved of my independence and unconventionality. It was the bitterest drop in my cup when I began to see that even you disapproved or distrusted—I hardly knew which."

"But I didn't!" Van Dorne said impetuously. "I believed from the very first that you

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were head and shoulders above those hypocritical women who criticized you; that often your seeming reckless gaiety was but to cover sadness and depression and to reassure the colonel, who watched you so anxiously.

"Of course I heard some of the talk. I knew that you had a reputation for being a trifler with hearts, but though I sometimes wondered, and wished that you would be more frank about yourself, I felt that I had no right to ask, and I never really doubted you for long. For a time I *did* mistrust, and I stayed away and waited, but when I saw you that night—well, you know what happened. I forgot everything, and when I made that engagement with you I intended to find out if I had a fighting chance against Evanston.

"It was then that I saw those words that told me the hateful truth and made me feel that it was useless to stay, since you despised me, and I thought of you and Evanston laugh-

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ing in your sleeves. At that time I felt that I would never want to see you again. Then I grew more rational. I saw in a way you were right. I *had* been leading an ineffectual life, and I was growing careless and egotistical. It ended in my caring more about redeeming myself in your eyes than about anything else."

"'Judge not' shall be my new motto," Patricia said aloud, and added to herself: "He did love me once, and quite unintentionally I hurt him so deeply that he can never feel the same toward me. In his heart he hates me, though he makes an effort to be kind and forgiving."

"It was all a sad misunderstanding," she went on, "and the pity of it isn't that you should have read those words—that was a matter I could laugh at, but for the sad consequences. It was that you should have be-

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lieved them all this time that grieves me. What I want to know now is, can you forgive me?"

But Van Dorne did not seem to have heard her.

"I begin to understand the secret of your wonderful charm," he said thoughtfully. "That little dancer must have been all fire and air, with a heart of gold."

Patricia did not answer. "You have a great career before you," she said at last, and her voice sounded cold and detached. "Your art will be a great boon to you, and will save you many homesick or lonely hours. I should like to hear from you from time to time, but of course our interests will diverge and my life will be narrow as compared with yours."

"Then it is true, after all?"

"What is true?" asked Patricia, looking puzzled.

"That you are going to marry Amos?"

"What has that to do with it?" Patricia

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temporized. "I was referring to my life at Bacalor."

She was silent a moment, then leaned forward, her hands clasped tightly, and said clearly:

"I did promise to marry him when he was through with his work here, and I suppose I will keep my promise in the end, but to-night——"

Van Dorne did not speak, and she would not finish her sentence. She was thinking again of the life that awaited her at Bacalor, should she break that promise. Suddenly her mind was made up, and she wondered how she would break her engagement without hurting Amos too much. Her nerves were keyed high, and, unable to bear the silence, she turned to Van Dorne.

A shaft of moonlight struck his face, throwing into relief its stern, clear-cut profile and revealing lines that had never been there be-

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fore. The shadows in the eyes had never been there, either, and the mouth showed the terrible discouragement of a naturally hopeful and recalcitrant nature.

Something drew her nearer, yet held her speechless.

"What do you see?" she asked in a whisper, following his fixed eyes.

"Only a boat, bound for Sabitan," he said wearily. "Your future—and mine."

Patricia tried to speak lightly and break the spell.

"What do you see in mine, my transcendental friend?"

"I see—a parsonage in a great city, and a zealous, earnest-faced, successful man, writing his sermon. You are not there; you are attending a guild or mission society meeting, or making clothes for the poor, unlucky little savages who will have to wear them."

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He laughed a queer little laugh that brought a troubled look to Patricia's eyes.

"And you—where are you?"

"Oh, I? Do you want to know? Well, I am entertaining all the officials of the island at dinner. There are planters' tales of graft and intrigue, with plenty of encouraging reports about the islands. There are lights, the clink of glasses, toasts and songs.

"Then 'taps' sounds, and one by one they leave, until I am left alone. My *muchacho* is asleep on the steps, but he rouses up, puts out the lights and leaves me alone in the garden with the flowers and the frogs and the bats.

"Then I smoke and dream. I think of what I have and what I have lost. But the red light has disappeared, and here I sit, talking nonsense.

"Good night!"

This time Patricia recognized finality in his

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tone, but she drew back, her eyes slowly kindling with comprehension.

He had said: "I did, I fear I always shall," and he had been thinking of her. "Was it possible that, in spite of everything, his love had been strong enough to have emerged unscathed from the stifling doubts and fears? Was it possible that he had forgiven her long ago?"

"You forgot to tell me one thing," she began haltingly. "I wasn't at the parsonage—perhaps the sky-pilot did not need me—did not need me as much as you did."

Van Dorne started and looked at her sharply, but he could see her face but dimly, and he gave his head an impatient shake.

"You are one of those women who love self-sacrifice only too well," he said gently. "I appreciate the feeling that prompted you to utter those words, but—I haven't sunk so low as to try to appeal to your pity. Don't think

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I meant that." The last words, spoken in a low tone, but with such concentrated scorn and horror at the idea, as the full force of it struck him, brought tears suddenly to Patricia's eyes.

"I would despise Amos or any other man who asked you to share such a life."

"Would it be worse than teaching school at Bacalor alone?"

"But you're not going to—— Didn't you say you had promised——"

"I did. I meant to fulfil my promise, but that was before you came. I had not seen you for years. I can't keep it now, Van—indeed, I cannot."

Patricia heard Van Dorne catch his breath hard, but she went feverishly on:

"I believe I could help you if you would let me stay—as the *princessa* of Sabitan. How well it sounds! I need help, too, in managing the plantation. The East owes us a debt for

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what she has taken from us forever—owes us happiness, which we both seem to have missed.”

Van Dorne looked up at her speechless, quite motionless. Then with a deep-drawn breath like the gasp of a drowning man he leaned forward and groped for her hand, drawing her near so he could see her face.

“Patricia, do you realize—you with your youth and beauty—your genius—to bury yourself for the best years of your life?”

“I shall appoint you grand vizier,” she said, ignoring his last remarks, the old gleam of mischief breaking through the shadows in her eyes, until she seemed like the Sun Goddess once more.

“I shall stand at the portals and dispense Oriental hospitality to travelers. For the Occidentals I shall brew a mental potion to calm their nerves, and in my lazy vassals I shall instill the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. If they refuse to work, I shall say ‘off with

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their heads.' ” She laughed lightly, but the strain of the evening was beginning to tell, and her hands were fluttering nervously and scattering flower petals at her feet.

“I don't mind your calling me ‘a lazy vassal,’ ” Van Dorne said, the dazed look on his face struggling with a joy hardly to be believed in as yet, “but are you perfectly sure that I am not a coldly egotistical and self-complacent snob?”

It took Patricia a long time to tell him what she really thought of him; so long, in fact, that Penn and Abdul surprised them as they came suddenly into the garden, which in the moonlight was as serene and beautiful as one of Corot's dream gardens.

Penfield, innocent of all knowledge of the contretemps that had come so near to tragedy in two lives, stood with questioning eyes turning from one to another, his lean little face

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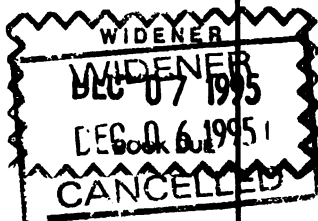
lit up by the faint light from the swinging lantern.

"Van, please don't go away and leave us," he pleaded, sidling toward Van Dorne, his eyes still wide and bright with the excitement of the evening. "Or, if you have to go, come back soon."

"I am coming back—and that soon," Van Dorne said triumphantly, as he swung the child to his shoulder.

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